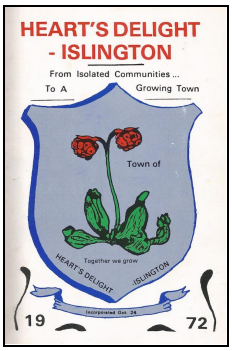
The following is Chapter 7 from the book "Heart's Delight - Islington: From Isolated Communities... To A Growing Town" Printed by Full Circle Printing for The Town of Heart's Delight - Islington, circa 1990.



CHRISTMAS TRADITION IN OUR HOME

Although the winds of time brought forth many changes and improvements to outport living, one tradition that hasn't changed much in our town, is the celebration of Christmas. Some say "it has become more modern and Christmas is not like it was," but Christmas is celebrated today very similar to what it was a hundred years ago.

The *Jannies* or *Mummers* usually start around the 20th of December and continue until the 6th of January. *Mummers are people who dress up in weird costumes: (old clothes) and go around to different houses to try to get people to guess them.* Some Mummers would often take a guitar, accordion, or mouth organ with them so they could have music for dancing.The Mummers would be treated very kindly and would usually be given beer, whiskey or syrup.

Christmas also means the carols; not just the regular Christmas carols, but the *Heart's Delight Carols* as they are called; sung by men of Heart's Delight-Islington for more than a hundred years. During the later years, women also joined the carolling. Down through the years, there have been a number of men who lead the carol sing; however, in the more recent years, you would have to think of people such as Heber Crocker with his old squeeze-box accordion or Joe Crocker on the north-east side of Heart's Delight and probably the most famous of all down through the years, Leander Peach.

Carolling takes place in several communities in the Trinity Bay South area of Newfoundland and there have been reports of a similar tradition in the Notre Dame Bay region. One of the communities with the strongest tradition is Heart's Delight-Islington.

THE HEART'S DELIGHT CAROLS

CAROL # 1

A virgin most pure, most pure behold
Brought forth our dear Saviour, as we have been told
For to be our Redeemer from death, hell and sin
From Satan's transgressions, the ruler of sin.

Near Bethelem City of Judah so fair,
Great multitudes of people together were there,
And they to be taxed as the custom ran so
Twas Caesar commanded that it should be so.

And when they had entered that city so fair,
Both Mary and Joseph together were there.
Their lodgings were simple; they beheld it no scorn.
By the very next morning our Saviour was born.

The King of all glory to this world now has come.
Small stores of fine linen to wrap him so warm.
Where Mary had a swaddling of a young son so sweet,
Down in the ox manger where she laid him to sleep.

Then God sent an Angel from Heaven so high
To give shepherds warning in fields where they lie.
Bidding them to be merry; drive sorrow away.
For our Saviour, Christ Jesus, was born that same day

Then shortly after a shepperd did spy
Great multitudes of Angels appeared in the sky.
And so merrily they were talking, and so sweetly did sing
All praise be glory to our Heavenly king.

CAROL # 2

The moon shines bright, and the stars give light
A little before it was day.
The Lord our God he calls on us all
And bids up to watch and to pray.

Awake, awake good people all
Awake and you shall hear,
The Lord our God died on the Cross
For us that He loved so dear.

There's talent at your head good man,
And another at your feet.
It's our bad deeds and your good works
Together and they shall meet.

I'll teach you all ye children of men,
While that I am here.
The Lord of God died on the Cross
For us that He loved so dear.

My carol is done and I must be gone.
I can stay no longer here.
God bless you all, both great and small
And send us a Happy New Year.

God bless the ruler of this house
And all that dwell in here.
God bless you all both great and small
And send us a Happy New Year.

Interview with Leander Peach

The following is an interview with Mr. Leander Peach. He tells how he and the men of the communities celebrated Christmas.

“What I have been doing over the years since i moved to Heart's Delight form Placentia Bay almost fifty years ago? Not so much lately because my health hasn't been that good.

I would start a couple of days before Christmas doing the chores: getting wood sawed off and brought in, and other things done around the house. Also, making sure my brew of beer was ady. Then on Christmas Eve in the afternoon, l would put my flask of old dark rum in my back pocket and dodge around to my friend's houses; probably I would end up in the Cove (meaning Islington). By ten or eleven o'clock, there would probably be twenty or thirty of us by that time. Most likely, we would all be feeling pretty good, not out of the way (because if anyone got drunk or rowdy, we would get rid of them). At this time of night we started singing the carols. We would go into a person's house, all piling into the porch or hall. There the lights would be turned off. No one smoked or took a drink while the carols were being sung. After we finished singing, all lights would come on in the house. The bottle of cheer would be passed around and we would have a drink; a salt caplin or something; a few songs and stories. Then we would move on to another house. We would always go to Frazer Jerrett s around three or four o'clock after they came home from midnight service. They would have the darn big roast of pork on, enough to feed a small army. I think Frazer raised a pig every year just to feed the carolers. We would have a great laugh telling stories and probably singing a song that I made up about someone. We would continue to visit as many houses as possible, from the Cove to most likely meeting up with Joe Crocker's crowd on the North East Side by late Christmas morning. We would often have three or four days of this during Christmas.”

The following songs are two of the many dozens that Leander made up over the years about people in Heart's Delight-Islington. I hope you enjoy reading the songs as much as we enjoyed Leander singing them.

They Woke Me When They Knocked Upon My Door

Oh, they woke me when they knocked upon my door.
Now that's Pleam [Sooley] and Harry Lilly – they was here before.
As the tear stood in his eye, Pleam said to Harry, "My throat is dry"
Yes, they woke me when they knocked upon my door.

Then they came and knocked upon my window pane.
I said to Greta, "Sure, the lads is here again."
And the words I did say, "Hope the Lord they'd go away."
Yes, they woke me when they knocked upon my door.

As I knelt down and tried to say my prayers,
I looked at Greta and her eyes was filled with tears.
She said, "Boy, this is not fair – go out and give 'em the damn old beer."
Yes, they woke me when they knocked upon my door.

Then I heard that old car when it started to roar.
I said, "Thank the Lord, sure now they're leaving the door."
When the horn it started to blast, I said,
“Thank the Lord They're gone at last.”
Yes, they woke me when they knocked upon my door.

Christmas Presents For My Family

I've a colouring book for Yvonne, roller skates for June.
Bobby pins for Greta – she'll be tuckin' her hair up soon.
To see those presents scattered around, all hanging on the tree.
When they opens 'em up, they'll all come and say old thanks to Lee.

Now there's two more in our family, Sure, they are married and gone.
And I hope that Santa won't forget them, when he goes passing along,
They used to sing "Jingle Bells” and "Silent Night" to we.
But they'll never find a Santa Claus as good as Santa Claus Lee.

I've a colouring book for Yvonne, roller skates for June.
Bobby pins for Greta – she'll be tuckin' her hair up soon.
To see those presents scattered around, all hanging on the tree.
When they opens 'em up, they'll all come and say old thanks to Lee.

To write about Christmas traditions, you would also have to mention the Orangeman's Parade and the social at night held every year on Boxing Day as well as the Fisherman's Parade and the social held every year on New Year's Day. At these socials, or times as they were called then, it would cost 10¢to get in and usually 15¢ to 35¢ for something to eat. You would also enjoy music from the brass band, after which a dance followed with music supplied by accordian. Now-a-days, Christmas has changed slightly with the addition of the Santa Claus Parade, outside Christmas lights and the annual Christmas sing in front of the town hall. Though it has changed, old traditions continue.

New Year's Eve is still “brought in” with the firing of guns as the clock strikes midnight.